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Sheppard Mullin Hires Local Patent Lawyers

LAW: Pair worked on big-name cases at Stradling, brought clients to Sheppard Mullin

■ By JESSICA C. LEE

Sheppard Mullin Richter & Hampton LLP has added two lawyers to its intellectual property practice in Costa Mesa.

Jennifer Trusso and Steven Hanle joined Los Angeles-based Sheppard Mullin last week from Newport Beach's Stradling Yocca Carlson & Rauth.

The move is the latest in a series of Orange County law firms boosting their intellectual property practices, a field some consider recession-proof.

"Intellectual property, as a whole, is growing," said Carlo Van den Bosch, Sheppard Mullin's intellectual property group co-chair.

Trusso and Hanle made a name for themselves on cases where they defended smaller companies against big names.

Last year, Trusso and Hanle helped defend Irvine medical device maker Allez Spine LLC in a patent suit brought by Johnson & Johnson's DePuy Spine Inc.

Before that, they helped defend generic drug maker Amphastar Pharmaceuticals Inc. of Rancho Cucamonga in a patent suit brought by France's Sanofi-Aventis over a blood thinning drug.

Trusso worked at Stradling for more than nine years. Hanle worked for the



Trusso



Hanle

firm for about 15 years.

The partners moved to Sheppard Mullin to broaden their work, they said.

"We saw a great opportunity to build our practice on a national platform," Hanle said.

Trusso and Hanle said they have brought clients from Stradling to Sheppard Mullin but wouldn't disclose names.

The lawyers remain on

friendly terms with Stradling, according to the firm's executive chair Michael Flynn.

"Steve and Jennifer are both excellent attorneys and they have been with our firm for a very long time," Flynn said. "Sheppard Mullin is an outstanding firm and on behalf of all of the partners of Stradling, I wish them both all of the best."

Recent Hiring

Sheppard Mullin is the No. 11 firm operating in OC, according to the Busi-

ness Journal's January list, which is ranked by number of lawyers. The firm now has about 65 lawyers, up from 53 in January.

The hires boost Sheppard Mullin's intellectual property group to 12 people, which includes partner and associate level lawyers and paralegals. Sheppard Mullin plans to continue growing its intellectual property practice, Van den Bosch said.

Another firm to recently add intellectual property lawyers is Rutan & Tucker LLP, which in May brought two lawyers from the Irvine office of Morrison & Foerster LLP, which since has closed.

The county is considered to be a hotbed for intellectual property since it's home to an array of industries with patents, such as medical devices, technology, drugs and apparel.

An economic downturn, which is said to create an upswing of lawsuits, has pushed more companies to become rigorous in protecting their ideas when others sue over them, Hanle said.

Trusso and Hanle's arrival comes about six months after Sheppard Mullin added 10 lawyers to its real estate, land use and environmental practice in Costa Mesa.

At the time, the firm nabbed eight lawyers from Boston-based Bingham McCutchen LLP's Costa Mesa office and two lawyers from the Irvine office of San Francisco-based Sedwick, Dertert, Moran & Arnold LLP.